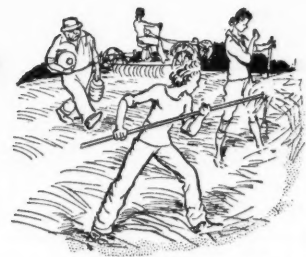




PUNCH

OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



Vol. CCII No. 5287

June 24 1942

Charivaria

"EIRE remains at peace in a world seething with war," says a Dublin writer. But it took a world seething with war to bring this about.

British soldiers in Libya have named one district Knightsbridge. We should not be surprised to learn that the Italians call another district Wilhelmstrasse.



MUSSOLINI says that the Reich can count upon the loyalty of the last Italian. It looks as if the Gestapo will soon be in a position to verify this.

"Babies of to-day will, in a few years, be proud that they were born in 1942," says a writer. Especially those who had prams.

Germans are now having to wear paper collars. What with the Gestapo on one side and the battle front on the other, however, many a German's neck is not worth the paper it is wrapped in.

"The Reich is watching Japan's campaigns with close attention," says a Nazi broadcaster. But doubtless Tokyo has long since taken the necessary precautions against this contingency.

"There are not many Japanese in Italy," remarks a writer. After all, the Germans got there first.

Off Duty

"Cook would like to meet spare-time swimming companion."—*Personal* Advt. in *Warwickshire Paper*.

The FUEHRER has announced that he will act as mediator in the Italo-French conflict, which is just what the Italians feared might happen.

LAVAL burst into tears during a luncheon he attended at Vichy. These tactics are useless in this country. Three courses, and three courses *only*, are served.

HITLER joined GOERING to attend HEYDRICH's funeral. The hope is expressed that before long there will be a further reunion of all three.

No one is allowed to take anything eatable out of Germany without a special ration permit. What the Germans are living on is a vital secret.

"A man should take an interest in his wife's clothes," says a writer. After all, half her coupons *were* his.

Whatever concessions the FUEHRER promised to the Finnish people during his recent visit, it cannot be doubted that he offered them a larger share in the attempted defeat of Russia.

An octogenarian recently stated that he started drinking beer when he was fourteen years old and hopes to toast the United Nations when peace comes again. He evidently thinks that beer will come again then, too.

Fashions in the North

"FOR SALE, an Ostrich Egg; Three Amethysts, and a Watch (Evening Wear)."—*Advt. in Northern Paper*.

"Italy," says a Rome broadcaster, "is really the most democratic country in the world." We'll believe it when we see a news-reel of MUSSOLINI marching past a body of Italian troops.



Home Front

DAY after day innumerable and wholly unnecessary tortures are being inflicted on long-suffering housewives, and only faint echoes of their agony reach the ears of men. Essentially Maginot-minded authorities strangle them with red tape. They writhe in regulations, put on a brave front and go out to the battle of points and coupons puzzled and bewildered—anyhow I am sorry for them, and whenever I can I do my best to help them with my advice.

"Let us get this thing straight," I said. "You are going into a flat which has an electric what-do-you-call-'em in the kitchen."

"Cooker."

"Cooker. And you want to cook with gas."

"I do."

"Well, make the electrical people take their rotten thing out, and tell the gas people to get cracking and come in."

She sighed.

"The Board of Trade say you can't change your fuel in war-time."

"But you aren't changing."

"The flat would be."

"This is worse than Heydrich. Why do you want it to change?"

"Because I hate electric cookers. They cook wastefully and badly and make a horrible dry heat which kills me. Honestly in fact they're awful."

"Then you have a clear case. This electrical abomination damages the country's war effort, reduces its food supplies, calls away miners from the fighting services, and spreads despondency and alarm. Is that right?"

"Roughly."

"You could live on raw carrots, you know."

"I don't want to live on raw carrots."

"Then you must take action. You have an Englishwoman's courage, an Englishwoman's pride. You can't be the slave of a cooker that is practically fighting on the enemy's side. Who foisted this awful engine on the flat?"

"The Borough Council, of course. It's rented from them."

"The Borough Council must take it away."

"Have you ever made a Borough Council do anything it didn't want to do?"

"I certainly have. A man came to disconnect all my

electricity a few weeks ago. Quite a nice man. He said the bill hadn't been paid for the last quarter. I asked him to show me the account and he did. I said that it had been paid, that the figure was wrong, that if he didn't go away I should sue the Borough Council for burglary, and that I had heard of some horrible scandals in the private lives of the Mayor and the Councillors, and that if anything was touched in my flat I should have them hounded from public life. With untold ignominy, I said. I think it was the last phrase which affected him most."

"Why, what did he do?"

"He said 'Righty-ho, governor,' and went away. It was an example of the unexpected counter-attack which has proved so successful in Libya. After that I posted a cheque. Morally and strategically the victory was mine."

"But you couldn't have made a Borough Council take one of their electric cookers away."

"Why not? If I don't want it I should charge them for storing their property on my premises."

"But I pay rent to them for lending it to me."

"That would be their case. But not a very strong one if it was proved to be sapping a tenant's vitality and losing the battle of the Atlantic and weakening the country's will for war. I can only think of one other way of getting rid of it."

"I'm sure it would be a very clever one."

"It would. I should hire a rough man to come in and smash up the iniquitous concern. Nobody would be able to prove anything. Then I should give it to the Salvage Board to be turned into aeroplanes. Then I should call in the gas commandos under cover of night, and present the Board of Trade and the Borough Council with a *fait accompli*."

"Thanks awfully. But I can't even get my gas-cooker yet. The brave lads of the Gas Light and Coke Company seem to have given up their struggle with the boys of the Central Electricity Board. Quislings have been at work. The two gangs are working together. And there's another thing. I want a refrigerator."

"You want to make your kitchen hot with gas and cold with electricity."

"I do."

"And you can't get your refrigerator from the Borough Council or the Federated Ice Control."

"I can't get one at all."

"But there were huge blocks of flats taken over for the troops, and simply stuffed with refrigerators."

"They're still there."

"But the troops don't feed in the flats."

"I know. But the refrigerators belong to the Company that owns the flats. So they stop there until the war ends. And I want a carpet-sweeper."

"Who owns carpet-sweepers?"

"Carpet-sweeper companies. But they don't seem to have any. Very likely they've been turned into tanks."

"Is there anything else you want?"

"I want curtains. But you have to give up clothes coupons for them."

"Well, why not?"

"Clothes coupons for curtains?"

"I see. Perhaps you'd better write to your M.P. about it, and have a question asked in the House. In secret session."

"Isn't there a paper-saving campaign?"

"Yes, I forgot that."

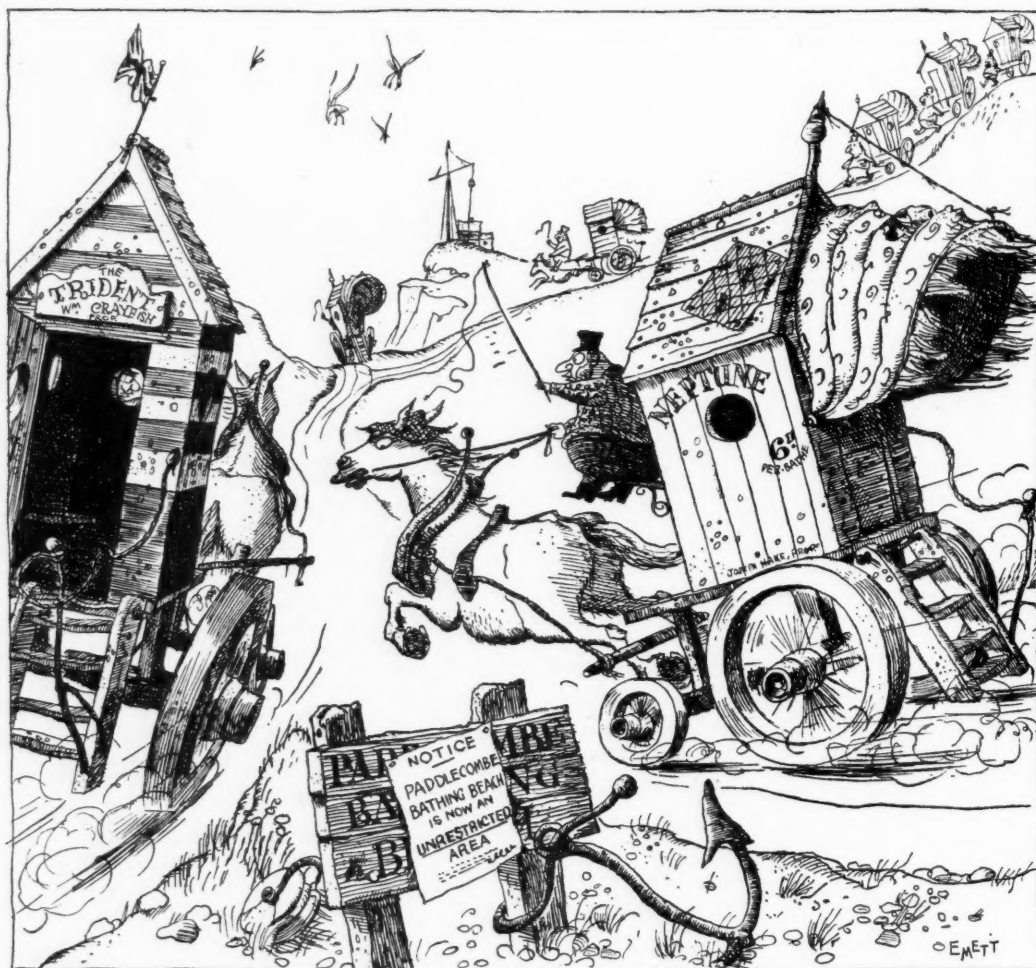
EVOE.



"The next question comes from Master George Huggins of Birmingham. He asks:—'If four men, working seven hours per day, can dig a trench thirty yards long in three days—how many . . .'"



"SAVE US!"



In Cyrenaica

H.Q. and H₂O

OUT here water is usually found in a "Bir" (pronounced as in Burton). While the same is true with a vengeance at home, it by no means follows that where there's a Bir there's water. A Bir is a well or cistern. To look at the map you might suppose Libya to be as liberally supplied with water-points as the Great North Road is with petrol-pumps. But all the cartographers pretend to guarantee is that water has been found in each of these Birs some time since the days of Ptolemy or, possibly, of the Hegira. Leaving out, therefore, the many Birs all surface-signs of which have been obliterated, the remainder may be divided into the Wets and the Drys.

As so many words have already been expended by the M.E.F. on the latter, we will concentrate on the damp Birs.

Having ascertained that a Bir actually contains a fluid not too obviously polluted by the Wops with Diesel oil, the next step is to determine for what purpose the liquid is suitable. This normally lies with the R.E. They draw samples, drop into them various powders, study the reactions, and then proceed to classify the water. Thus if the fluid turns a deep petunia it is all right for laving the hands or feet, but unsuitable for shaving. A salmon-pink tint denotes that it will wash denim overalls or khaki drill, but is liable to cause shrinkage if applied to

woollens. Grade A water, indicated by a change to Marina blue, is fit for all purposes, even to teeth-cleaning and filling water-bottles. Pillar-box red suggests a water that won't lather but gives a tolerable brew of tea, while that which affects an orange hue should be eschewed by all but natives of Harrogate or Buxton.

Provided you have a sapper handy, and he is armed with the requisite powders, that system works reasonably well. Not having any engineers with us we have come to rely on the Padre. Though not a teetotaller, through protracted attacks of severe abstinence he has retained a highly sensitive, not to say discriminating, palate. Where

others regard water as something to bathe in, spray the lawn with, or as the thing that sunders the United Nations, the Padre treats it as a beverage—and one, moreover, as rich in possibilities, major variations and subtle nuances as the combined wines of France, Unoccupied and Hun-occupied. In addition, thanks to years and years of missionary endeavour in Central Africa—where he successively contracted and successfully surmounted all the best diseases, from beri-beri to trichinosis—he enjoys so far a one-hundred-per-cent. immunity from the afflictions that threaten those who neither boil nor otherwise sterilize the waters of Cyrene before drinking them.

Until the Padre joined us at H.Q. we used to judge water solely by its appearance. Colour, clarity, degree of effervescence, holding of algae and animalculæ—these were the criteria on which we based our decision. A water passing muster on these counts was chlorinated, boiled, then pronounced fit for whatever purpose was in mind. This, we now realize, meant a serious waste of time and chemicals. Now all we have to do is let the Padre taste it. The visual test he scorns, relying entirely on his trusty palate. Like a professional wine-taster, he can do his job blindfold. Let him but sip, all unseeing, from an egg-cup, and after only so much delay as is needed to swallow he will deliver his verdict: "Tobruk, 1941," or "Bir El Matr, 1942," or else "Ridotto Diabolo—out of a petrol-tin," or may be, "Charuba, non-vintage." These "cuvées" we know, and their qualities. With the aqueous "vin ordinaire," yield of the random Bir, to which he can give neither name nor age, he yet gives a sufficient indication of its merits and shortcomings. Words like "brackish," "saline," "argillaceous," "alkaline," "ferruginous," "germicidal," "parricidal," and so on, the mumbo-jumbo clichés of water-engineers, have little meaning for us. The Padre does not employ them. Instead he uses coloured crayons. Tins containing Grade A water are marked with a white cross. A red one brands that usable in cooking or brewing tea; a blue one fit for shaving purposes; the orange cross is the sign of water for personal ablutions; green is for laundry-water.

Our only catastrophe to date occurred when Ack-and-Quack found his water-bottle filled with paraffin. The Divisional Supply Column, who feed our hurricane lamps besides our bodies, have a shove-ha'penny board. They carry white chalk. If you're hanging about waiting for a lorry, and are a member of the

sporting fraternity, noughts - and - crosses, though not shove-ha'penny, is better than nothing, and the tiers of neatly-stacked paraffin-tins at the Supply Dump form the ideally-squared field of play.

But the Padre had no hand in that. Only once we did catch him out. It was when we kept on taking Benghazi. Somebody came from there bringing a gigantic demi-john alleged to contain Chianti. If it was Chianti it was distinctly ersatz. We all agreed that the Wops were quite right to leave it behind.

The Brigadier had a guest that night. The P.M.C. had a private word with him about the Chianti. "Hum!" the Brigadier hawed, "I don't want my guest poisoned. Better try it out first on the Padre."

The Padre endured his usual form of introduction: "The Padre, Colonel! The Padre's our water-expert. From Divine to Diviner, what!" Then they blindfolded him. He sipped from the egg-cup, paused a long time, sipped again. "No," he kept muttering to himself, "Derna—Msus—Bir Hashish—no." Then, after a final sip, slowly rolled round and round with his tongue: "I'm sorry, sir, I can't place it. The nearest to it I know is Liffey

water, Dublin, 1937. Anyway, unfit for consumption or ablution. It may of course have possibilities as an insecticide."

Next time we capture Benghazi I suppose we shall be using "Asti Spumante" in place of health-salts.

Downingham Armed

EQUIPPED with our bombards and hush-hush projectors, We are calm; no one doubts, no one bickers. Each man knows his duty, and even the Rector's In charge of a couple of Vickers.

Impending Apology

"IRON RAILINGS IN CHURCHYARD

THIS IS IMPORTANT to any who have family graves in the Churchyard. Iron is being asked for for munitions; in some cases it is being commandeered; possibly it will be from our Churchyard. But it is much nicer to give it than wait for it to be taken, and surely that is what our departed ones would have wished (unless they really served some useful purpose for our country)."

Parish Magazine.



"... and now, what is there I can buy to-day that you won't have to-morrow?"

At the Pictures

THE AIR AND THE JUNGLE

It's unfortunate that *Roxie Hart* should begin just too late for these notes; for the many other films on view in London at the moment, though exceedingly various, don't seem to me to be very bright.

Misled by the publicity and the fact that it was "so big that it had to be shown at two West End cinemas at once," I was expecting great things of *Flying Fortress* (Director: WALTER FORDE). A good many of the same things, possibly: fiction about flying always has to involve the juxtaposition in the same plane of two or more unfriendly characters, and if possible a heroic climbing-out-on-the-wing by one of them in full flight; but at least something special besides the facilities provided by the R.A.F. But no; in this piece nearly all the distinction has been provided by the R.A.F. and hardly any by the film-makers. The first half-hour here consists of that sad old stuff I thought we'd seen the last of—the painstakingly-vivacious, over-lit, exhibitionist British-idea-of-America, or in other words a string of British remakes of the most hackneyed sequences of American films.

It is when we get into the life of the R.A.F.—film-makers are gradually and unwillingly getting rid of the assumption that the only way to arouse our interest in the R.A.F. is to cause a few film heroes to join it—that the film wakes up and becomes absorbing, apart from the spectacular mid-air feat already hinted at. Even the dramatics and the schoolboy repartee put in to liven it up cannot dull the impact and the interest of the detail of the preparations for and the achievement of a big bombing raid; personally, I'd have preferred to see them in a documentary of the *Target for To-Night* kind, but perhaps you wouldn't. RICHARD GREENE, DONALD STEWART and CARLA LEHMANN capably go through the motions we

have seen so many people go through before, and a few small-part people have better luck.

There is a similar objection to the piece of nonsense called *Jungle Book* (Director: ZOLTAN KORDA). For the

animals in the jungle. One doesn't feel any great confidence in the authenticity of the circumstances: when the tiger lifts its lip and emits some explosive coughs and roars one suspects that a stick is being poked at it out of camera range, as one does with the M.G.M. lion's well-known performance; but it makes a handsome sight.

The excuse for the blurb outside the Gaumont, "A Thousand-and-One Secrets of the Jungle Revealed!" I don't see. The animals talk, but only to make pompous Kiplingesque remarks about the Law of the Jungle and not to reveal any secrets. Only the snakes, I think, are allowed to talk in English (they do so in husky whispers, and one reminded me somewhat of LIONEL BARRYMORE); the other animals yell or scream or trumpet or cough, and *Mowgli* (SABU) then explains what they said—

on the whole a better method, though sometimes one feels inclined to doubt his interpretation. . . . But nearly all the appeal here is to the eye; the ear has all sorts of things to put up with.



BUDDIES

Sky Kelly DONALD STEWART
James Spence RICHARD GREENE

effectiveness of what it does, the documentary or even the DISNEY approach would have been better. What it does is to give us a number of very striking coloured pictures of wild



HOWLS AND GROWLS

Mowgli SABU

The best sheer entertainment this time comes, I think, from the new DIETRICH picture, *The Spoilers* (Director: RAY ENRIGHT). Here again admittedly we have nothing new; indeed, this particular story has been filmed twice before; but gusto, technical skill, and the perennial effectiveness of certain narrative incidents (clichés or not) make all the difference. In this story of the violent goings-on in an Alaskan mining-town in 1900 the climax is a fight between the hero and the chief villain which begins in an upstairs room and ends in the street, with never a dull moment in between. There is plenty of other action in the eighty minutes or so leading up to this, including some gun-fights, a jail-break, and the deliberate crashing of a train through a barrier. In the quieter moments Miss DIETRICH is seen to advantage. It's good rowdy effective stuff, with some amusing dialogue.

R. M.

Signals Celibates

EVERY so often, in words dripping with honey, the Admiralty invites officers to apply for Courses, and all the officers who have had a row with the Captain that morning invariably apply. Courses usually require a knowledge of higher mathematics, calculus, a sound knowledge of physics, astronomy and modern Greek. Or, failing that, they invite the ambitious to learn how to dispose of unexploded bombs. It is only very rarely that a Course demands "no technical knowledge whatsoever," and when this happens there is a tendency to apply rashly without further thought.

Which, roughly speaking, was how twelve of us came to be learning Morse at Basegram Hall.

Morse, as you know, is a series of dots and dashes inextricably mixed. You can make Morse with a light, which is called Flashing; or you can make it on a little machine screwed to a table, which is called Buzzing. In certain circumstances you can make it on a ship's siren, when you get a series of bubbles and a rush of gurgling hot water that drenches everyone on deck.

In any case, Morse is useless unless you can read it.

Every morning at Basegram Hall they make us put on our headphones and they buzz for us. The great thing in learning to read Morse is not to worry if you miss a letter. You must dismiss it from your mind and concentrate on the next one. In this way you progress in certain well-worn stages. To begin with, when you look at what you have written it is something like this:

"t.....z....plq.....e"

This may be depressing, but it is astonishing what stubborn application can do. After a few days, as if by magic, you reach:

"it was nil emplishment was in wirts."

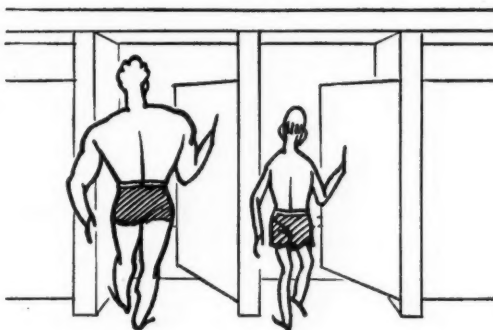
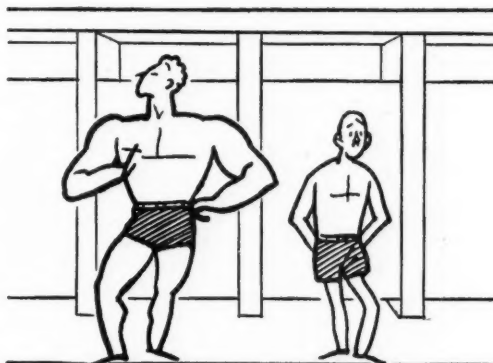
This is very satisfactory, but at Basegram Hall it is unwise to congratulate yourself too soon. For if you give the least sign of being able to read Morse it is immediately made a great deal faster and you can't read it again for a week.

Petty Officer Postagram gives us our buzzer exercise. For years Petty Officer Postagram has been making Morse, and he can actually read it faster than he can write it down. When he makes Morse he sits with one hand on the key and with the other he scratches his nose while gazing wistfully out of the window. Occasionally he becomes convulsed with laughter at our tortured faces. He is a kind and friendly man, however, and sometimes you can get him to read out a little bit of the exercise after it is over.

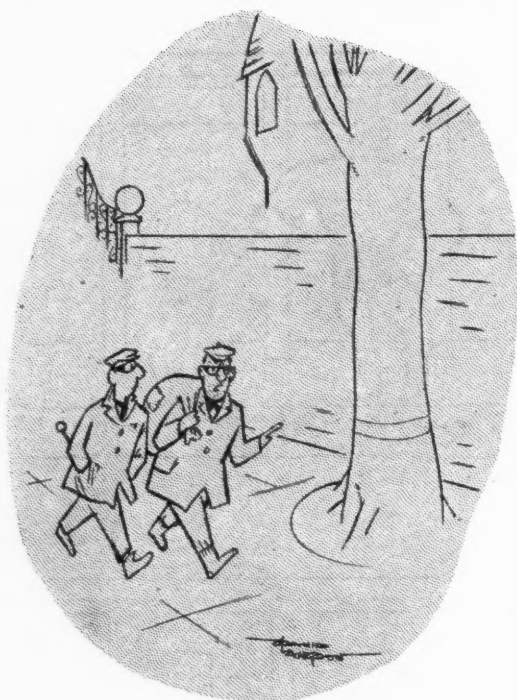
Not so our instructor, Lieutenant Lumping. When Lieutenant Lumping makes Morse he really means business. He grits his teeth and hammers the key like a man possessed. Not only does he expect you to read what he makes, he actually wants you to *reply*. This is fairly easy, actually, because after a few minutes' silence you are aware that Lieutenant Lumping is glaring at you and you know it is your turn to answer.

It has not taken our Course long, in fact, to realize that there is more in attaining proficiency at Morse than merely making stern efforts to read it. You can, for instance, look at what the man next to you has written. This is all right because you know he is looking at what you have written and that the chances are that both of you are wrong.

There is something too in knowing what kind of prose is favoured by the person who sets the exercise. If the piece



Fengood



*"Let me see now—Thursday night The Laurels,
Friday night St. James's Mansions, Saturday night
fire-watching, Sunday night Laburnum Court."*

is selected by one of the Wrens it is all about dukes, moonlight, the mail-boat back from China, and handsome men with quizzical eyes. Petty Officer Postagram, a man who can face facts, usually likes a bit culled from old newspapers about Singapore the impregnable. On the other hand, his relief, a lugubrious man, positively enjoys anything about a good funeral. "It isn't easy," he taps, "to see your wife die inch by inch before your eyes." Or, "Colours will be half-masted from 1700."

We do our exercises on a special printed sheet with neat spaces for our names and for that of the corrector of the exercise. Our exercises are always corrected by G. Glossing, and it has not taken some of us long to discover that G. Glossing is a Wren. We know that it is as well to be on the right side of G. Glossing.

The ways of approach have been varied. Lieutenant Playfair, for instance, favours the old method of trying to discover the Christian name. He puts Gertrude???? on his sheet one morning and Gladys???? the next. This method is good for a few marks, but Sub-Lieutenant Crimp is more pushful and has taken G. Glossing to a dance at the village hall. He claims that by this means he can even get her to write in correct words for him. He also says her name is Griselda, but no one believes him.

But you must not think we do not take our Morse seriously or that we are all equally inefficient. Lieutenant Lanyard, for instance, has been able to read Morse for years, ever since he was a Boy Scout, and each mistake he makes is like a drop of blood to him. He even remembers particular

letters that have been made early in the exercise and says to himself, "That's funny." When he makes a mistake there is nothing underhand about him. He takes the direct line.

"Look here," he says, "you gave me dar-dar-dee-dar."

"No, sir," says the Petty Officer. "Dee-dar-dee-dee, that's what it was."

"Dee-dar-dee-dee?"

"Yes, sir."

"I could have been certain," says Lieutenant Lanyard, "that it was the dee-dar-dee-dee just before the dar-dar-dar."

He makes the alteration firmly but regretfully. I don't suppose it matters, because Lieutenant Flake says we have only been selected for the Course for social reasons. He doesn't suppose we shall need Morse to arrange an Admiral's dinner-party or dance attendance on his daughter.

"Not that I'm here for social reasons," he says to me, "or you, for that matter."

Which is rather unflattering, because sometimes, in view of my Morse, I wonder why I am at Basegram Hall. I'm sure Lieutenant Lumping wonders, too.

Cookhouse Fatigue

COME, bashful Spud, my swart and dark-eyed joy,
Come, let me clutch thee, while with pensive blade
And soft caressing touch I limn thy shape
More delicate, more moving to the heart,
Than all the fabrifice of Greece or Rome.
I would thy beauty had a longer term,
Yet haply, ere thou vanish, one wise soul
May mark thy greatness and with brandished fork
Display thee to his peers, and cry aloud
"Green 1840 wrought this perfect thing."
(Unless they mash thee. But they dare not that.)
Lo, he is finished. I hereby declare
This fine potato well and truly bashed.
Ay, good my Sarge, I did it all myself.
But what? Of numbers is thy only care,
Nor heedst thou beauty, so the pail be filled?
Enough; hereafter spud shall press on spud
Hot for the sacrifice, and flying peel
With envious eye dispute the darkened air.
(He basheth.)

What wealth of eyes these earthy monsters wear!
Even such a face might Plato wish himself
To view his love with multitudinous sight;
Nay, had those ancients grown this peering sprout,
In other wise their myth had surely run
And Argus had been spared his fatal watch.
(He basheth.)

Almost I love this task; there comes with use
A speed, an ease, a fluency (oh damn!)
Wherewith ensues a calm content of mind,
A sweet tranquillity; one might, methinks,
Bash, bash for ever, and for ever bash.
This my sole horror, lest one might imbibe
The gradual poison deep into the blood,
And meeting casual strangers in the ways
Exoculate them lightly, and pass on.
(He basheth.)

I have been bashing since the world began;
And now the sweet tranquillity is off,
The calm content of mind is down the drain.
I care not peel I no potato more,
Nor eat one roast, nor fried, nor boiled, nor baked,
Nor vie with winds in the Potato Race.

(He basheth.)

Come, Sergeant, praise me, for the pail is filled.
Nay, prate not now of blemish nor defect;
Thou hast thy numbers, and my wearied blade
Pants only for the sheath. And yet—and yet—
Thou hast, I see, a rarely knifesome skin,
I love thy darkling eyes. Come, bashful Sarge!

Strategic Conceptions

TRAINING is over and it is Rumour Night in the Mess. Lieutenant Tinkle says that he has heard up at Sub-Area that we are to be issued with tanks, provided that we will pay for the petrol amongst ourselves. Lieutenant Bumper, the Battalion Transport Officer, says that this is a garbled version of the truth. The fact is that the War Office have some tanks which are the wrong shape owing to the plans getting into a strange department at the Ministry of Supply, and they are willing to sell these to the Home Guard at cost on the understanding that the Army may need them back if we can get them to go. The War Office idea is that we should not need much petrol as we are static.

Captain Hackett says that this must be wrong, as the whole strategic conception of the employment of the Home Guard has been altered in the last few weeks. Now that the War Office have decided to have the invasion over on the Continent instead of here, we are no longer static. What will happen is that the Home Guard will go over with the Regular Army and take its civilian work with it to do in the day-time. Then it will be on the spot to take over in the evenings and at week-ends, like it does now, so that the Regulars can go square-pushing.

Lieutenant Wiggle says that in his view we have a clear case against the War Office over this invasion. When we joined it was distinctly understood that we would have it here where we could get to and fro. It is sheer sharp practice to start mucking the arrangements about now.

Captain Hackett says that it would be unwise to raise the matter as the War Office is mad enough already about our terms of service, having just realized that it forgot to charge us an entrance fee.

Captain Gollop says that all these stories are quite unreliable. It happens that his niece is one of the three girls at the War Office who run the Home Guard, and she has told him in confidence. It seems that we are to take over the barrage-balloon sites and replace a number of Waafs, who will go into the Army so as to release a lot of miners, who by returning to the mines will ease things off there and enable more of them to join the Home Guard, thus keeping up our strength.

The Adjutant has just come in and is very mysterious. He says that he has good news for us but it is too secret to tell. At last he admits that it is a New Weapon which will be issued at once and will enable us to perform our new

strategic rôle. We are to start lecturing the men about it right away but we must not tell them what it is as there was such a row last time. Lieutenant Wiggle wonders what Lord Croft has got hold of now, but the Adjutant explains that Lord Croft is not allowed to pick Home Guard weapons any more. It seems that there was a great deal of trouble behind the scenes about all that gas-piping he welded bayonets on to, as the Army needed it badly for goal-posts, and as a result of his thoughtlessness have had to use the same ones over and over again.

Lieutenant Tapper says that he has heard that when the invasion starts on the Continent the Home Guard will take over all the functions of the Regular Army here at home, but Lieutenant Wiggle says that he does not think that the girls would stand for it, and looking round the Mess he would be the last to blame them.

Lieutenant Tinkle says that on his local council there is a growing feeling that the Home Guard is not pulling its weight, as some of the councillors still have to do fire-watching, which the Home Guard could do just as well, seeing that it stays up anyhow. Lieutenant Tinkle says that he thinks that the council will probably write to the War Office and offer to hire the Home Guard for a small sum each night, in which case the War Office will probably fall for it, as they must feel that the Home Guard is not doing much financially towards maintaining the Regular Army. In fact when Home Guards start putting in for subsistence it practically means that they are running the force at a dead loss.

Lieutenant Crasher has just come in from Zone where, with his strange tastes, he has friends. He says that he should not tell us as it is meant to be a surprise, but the whole strategic conception of the employment of the Home Guard has just been changed. It would be as much as his job is worth to tell us the details, but he does not mind dropping us the hint that we are to start learning swimming and Russian right away.

A. M. C.



"It was in the 'Pitby Suggestions' box addressed to the Manager."

The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this paper should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export.



"... and of course those exercises must get you quite used to being missed by live ammunition."

Panic

THIS is the darkest hour of my drab little life!
You remember that letter full of important enclosures
for Miss Maxse?

Well, it's disappeared! Plainly speaking, I have lost it,
and I intend to go straight out and lie down in front of
a taxi.

You are not being at all amiable, not at all sympathetic.
Is it nothing to you that my hair has turned two shades
whiter?

If you are unable to make the correct compassionate
noises,
at least you might have the grace to look under your
typewriter!

Now I put it *here*—no I didn't, it was *there*;
I pinned it to the table with the edge of my Out
tray,

unless, of course, I put it *in* to the Out tray, which would
considerably clarify matters.

(I simply do not see how I can survive to-day.)

Would you be courteous enough to raise your feet?
I wish to look under that obscene little mat of yours.

It would appear that your friendship for me does not go
the length
of seeking for lost things on all fours.

Do not smile. You would not smile if you had lost
Miss Maxse's letter!

(By the way, just see if it is stuck to that pot of glue?)
If only I thought she would strike me savagely across
the face with some blunt instrument!

But she will be kind, I know, and my heart will break in two.

Very well then, it is lost, and I will pay the supreme
penalty.

Every folly, we are told, is bought at a price;
and doubtless when they are dragging the static water
troughs for my body,
you will be sorry—it will not be at all nice.

I am going now, my friend, here is my wrist-watch and
my badge,
here is a piece of snow-white hair to wear round your neck
in a locket,

and here, as a matter of fact, is Miss Maxse's letter,
which some great fool must have put in my overcoat pocket!

V. G.



THE BOOKWORM

"I want everything you've got about the retreat from Moscow."

[There is a Geneva report that HITLER has ordered the Paris authorities to hand over all documents relating to Napoleon's Russian campaign.]

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, June 16th.—House of Lords: Tribute to Seamen. House of Commons: Glimpses of a Brave New World.

Wednesday, June 17th.—House of Commons: A Trifle More for the Kitty.

Thursday, June 18th.—House of Commons: Much Ado.

Tuesday, June 16th.—Herr Doktor JOSEF GOEBBELS, who has been lamenting the rudeness of the Berliner in these hard Hitlerian times, would have been made purple with fury (or green with envy) had he been in the House of Commons to-day.

Mr. I. C. HANNAH, who represents Bilston, in Staffordshire, with an intense earnestness (combined with sardonic humour) which has endeared him to the whole House, did it. He asked a Minister a question—nothing unusual about that, of course. He was not satisfied with the reply—nothing unusual about that. So he gave notice that he would raise the same question in debate, on the adjournment. Nothing whatever unusual about that.

It was not what he said, but the nice way he said it. Most Members

and what the Victorian novelist would call "tears in his voice," said this: "I very much regret the absolute necessity of bringing this question up on the adjournment!"

The whole bench of Ministers looked as if they could hardly restrain themselves from rising, bowing or curtsying, and murmuring in unison: "Not at all—a pleasure, I'm sure."

Everything was conducted on that prunes and prisms basis to-day. Sir JAMES GRIGG, the War Minister, who is rapidly becoming a considerable Parliamentarian, made a special point of answering every one of the scores of supplementary questions fired at him. Not for him is the swift glance at the ceiling and the sudden deafness which denotes bankruptcy of repartee.

Even Miss IRENE WARD, to whom the War Office represents a red rag, was gentle with Sir JAMES. Sir ALFRED KNOX, who wanted the Minister to run up and down hills in Home Guard boots, just to prove how rough and sock-wearing they are, received a positive—or rather, negative—beam from the Minister.

There was a storm of cheers when Major GWILYM LLOYD GEORGE, new Minister of Fuel and Power (the "Light" has gone out of his title, but not from his eye), rose to answer his first questions in that office. Awkward sort of question, the first one was.

If there is fuel rationing, the country will be divided up—north, midlands, south—the north getting most fuel, the midlands less and the south least. But, a questioner pointed out, cold did not go that horizontal way. The east was coldest, the middle less cold, the west warmest, in vertical lines.

Major GWILYM gently and hopefully explained that thermometers did not necessarily have much relation to the warmth of the human body, or to geography. Mr. SHINWELL acutely pointed out that the whole thing was hypothetical, anyway, because the Government has not yet decided to have fuel rationing.

So it went on—

Suave politeness, tempering bigot zeal,
Correcting "I believe" to "One does feel."

Even Mr. CLEMENT ATTLEE, who specializes in hot water plunges for which the services of Major LLOYD GEORGE's department are not needed, came in for kind glances. When Sir HERBERT WILLIAMS rather gruffly suggested that the Minister should read his own bygone speeches, there were shocked cries of "Atrocity!" and Sir HERBERT hung his head in shame.

When we were very young—well, young—we were puzzled by the time-honoured gag which informed us that "Charles the First walked and talked half an hour after his head was cut off." It all depended on that little, wiggly comma or queer-looking semi-colon



MINERVA, PATRONESS OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Butler gets busy with his *magnum opus*.

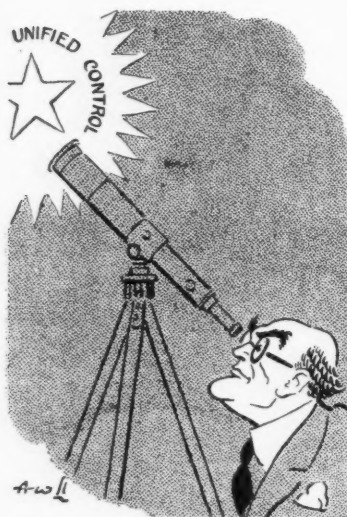
inserted by a highly-gratified governess or form-master after "talked."

Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS and Mr. JIMMY MAXTON figured in a real-life version of this to-day. Sir STAFFORD mentioned that some business would be taken "on the Third sitting day after some other business." Mr. MAXTON wanted to know whether this meant *three days* after the other business, or *on the same day* as the other business, but *subsequent* to it.

Sir STAFFORD, with governess-like glee, explained that there should be a comma between "day" and "after." The House was still in what Mrs. Malaprop would have called this state of comma when Mr. R. A. BUTLER, Minister of Education, began a speech explaining his dreams and aims for the (mainly post-war) future of education in Britain.

But they soon began to sit up and take notice as this young man unfolded his ambitious plans for the Brave New World (brave it will certainly *have* to be) for there was vision here, and missionary fire, and a queer kind of monotonous urgent eloquence that grew on the listeners.

Mr. BUTLER wants every child to have the best education that can be



HIS GUIDING STAR

Lord Reith looks into the future.

would have snapped the formula: "Owing to the unsatisfactory nature of the reply, I give notice that I shall raise this matter on the adjournment!"

They arrange these things better in Bilston.

Mr. HANNAH, with a courtly bow



"It's unfortunate that your visit should have coincided with our Workers' Playtime."

given. He sees in that the best chance of a new world, a lasting peace.

It was a friendly, urbane debate, with few criticisms and lots of pats on the back.

Over in the Lords, Super-Master-Mariner Lord MARCHWOOD pleaded once again the case of the merchant seaman, asking that men who, torpedoed, drifted on rafts and got tuberculosis should have pensions, as they would had they lost limbs. The plea got a big cheer from the House, but the Government only made non-committal noises.

Wednesday, June 17th.—What, as Mr. WILL HAY might say, is a number of bishops? Mr. BRENDAN BRACKEN, the Minister of Information, startled the House to-day by speaking, quite seriously, of a "flock of bishops." Nobody had the temerity to question this new collective noun coming from so high an authority, and they also let pass, ten seconds later (from the same authority), the phrase "beating the Government up" as describing the activities of the Opposition towards His Majesty's advisers.

Mr. DUNCAN SANDYS, of the War Office, got a passable imitation of the theatrical "bird" for trying to score

off the House. Asked why Army policy differed from Navy and Air Force in some respect, he smartly retorted that the inquiring Member "had better ask the Navy and Air Force."

The roar of disapprobation of this "crack" seemed to startle and discompose the Minister more than somewhat. The tone of the House switched abruptly to congratulatory cheers for Mr. WILLIAM MABANE, making his bow as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food. And a very competent, good-humoured, well-informed bow it was—if bows can have those attributes. Lord WOOLTON is fortunate in his lieutenants; the House is lucky to have its food questions answered in so audible and informing a voice.

Mr. PEAKE, of the Home Office, had some more to say about the white-feather distributors. He said the Government did not propose to elevate "this stupid and objectionable practice" to the rank of a statutory crime. The no-less-effective Common Law dot on the nose is still open, however.

There followed one of those monotonous demands from the Government for a few pounds more for the war kitty. Something about £1,000,000,000 it was

—but nobody bothered greatly; the sum might have been the nine noughts alone for all most people bothered.

It was an easy switch from these figures to the 10s. a week of the Old Age pensioner. The House gets passionate about these pensions, and it debated their sufficiency, or insufficiency, for many hours.

Nothing much came of it all.

Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, Chancellor of the Exchequer, promised an inquiry into Old Age and Widows' pensions, and this gave general pleasure. He pointed out, however, that (the preceding business notwithstanding) the national purse was not bottomless. Which gave less satisfaction on the Opposition benches.

Thursday, June 18th.—Mr. MORRISON, the Home Secretary, having announced (apparently as a concession to the innate conservatism of cows) that double summer-time will end, as arranged, on August 8th, Sir STAFFORD CRIPPS passed through a fiery furnace of questions about coming business. Quite a to-do, there was. Members fired questions on all sorts of matters, from all sorts of angles and with all sorts of intentions. But Sir STAFFORD, smiling, won through.



"I chained my bike to the railings for safety, and when I came back they'd taken both for salvage."

Dive-Bombers

WE were carrying out anti-submarine exercises with another patrol ship. As you can imagine, when several hundred-weight of T.N.T. detonate in the water the fish feel the effects, and enterprising individuals, more particularly caterers of messes, had already gathered by the ship's side aft with buckets and fannies.

A pink thing was sighted ahead. It turned out to be a solid old party with goggle eyes and pousy features floating tummy up, two small fins under his chin pointing helplessly skywards. He drifted down the ship's side while people threw grappnels and poked at him with boat-hooks.

The stewards had tied the wardroom waste-paper basket to an old oar, and Robert and I, being off duty, tried to swish the great fish into it as he went by. He stared at the sky and spun round and round, and could we get him into the basket? Two gulls settled down beside him and began to

peck at him in a doubtful way, as though not quite certain whether he mightn't resent it. We did. We shouted at them—the rudest things we could think of—but they kept pecking.

There was a lot of signalling with the other ship, and it became plain that we were going to send a boat away. The C.O. is very keen on hands getting plenty of boatwork.

While we were watching this evolution somebody said "Look, there's a gannet, sir."

"Can't be a gannet," corrected Robert. "They don't breed as far down south as this."

I felt sure it was a gannet. He flew by quite close and you could see his parti-coloured face, like a clown made up as a schoolmaster. He flew in a methodical and efficient way—unlike our gulls, who never appear to give a flap if they can find a cosy up-current to balance on, or do a bit of wave-hopping on the surface eddies.

An old stoker standing by Robert with a piece of sacking and line made into a sort of net, oblivious of all ornithological refinements, advanced the surprising theory that all such birds were born out of wedlock. "If he comes," he said, "good-bye to our fish tea."

He was plainly a serious kind of bird, intent only on one thing. You could see he had no time to waste when he crooked his wings and side-slipped neatly. He went under in a little splash, and bobbed up again holding his fish.

"They keep their catch to regurgitate to their chicks," said Robert, who was coming back to the gannet theory.

"I'd regurgitate him . . ." said the stoker.

"Look! Dive-bomber, Joe!"

"Dive-bomber, where? Oh, another of those damned birds. Must have radio-located us."

Already there were a score, wasting

no time, quartering the depth-charged area methodically, not doing spectacular dives, but just a series of efficient drops from twenty feet or so. They took the fish below the surface, before the gulls even saw them. Presently the gulls were completely driven out of competition, got bored, and went and sat on the water in a huddle about a mile away. Not too far, though, in case the galley should throw something overboard.

The boat went away with Patrick in charge. From the bridge came a tinny, breathy, over-amplified voice. The loud-hailer was to be used to give directions. "Testing. Testing. One-ah. Two-ah. Three-ah. Four-ah. Five-ah. Boat ahoy! A fish—a big red fish—bearing red two oh from us, two hundred yards."

Great excitement down aft as the possibility of fish suppers came closer. "Mac's seen him"—(Mac being bow in the boat)—"Lumme, he ain't half big!"

"Good evening, everybody," blared the loud-hailer suddenly in a business-like gabble. "This is the Home and Forces Programme. Here is the six o'clock news . . . Alvar Liddell . . . an account . . . Richard Dimpleby . . . Battle of the Atlantic . . . one of our patrol ships beating off an air-attack."

The people on deck cheered, and the loud-hailer, pleased with its imitation, emitted a realistic drone, rising to a scream as a gannet—a late arrival in a hurry—came shooting down from a height, and then broke into a running commentary. "There he goes—no, I've lost him—he's in the sun. There he is. By jove, he's a Junkers 57!—a Junkers 57—the boys have started shooting—shooting—yes—I believe they've hit him. They've hit him, haven't they, Yeoman? (This is the Yeoman of Signals standing beside me.) There he goes. Diving down, down. He's hit the water. Now what's happening? What's that you say, Captain? (This is the C.O. standing beside me.) Something's bobbed up. Oh, there's a fish. An enormous fish. Red one double oh."

Again we raised a cheer. Then it became plain that something was happening in the boat.

The loud-hailer clicked again and began to drawl: "This is Gairmany calling! Gairmany calling! Coming to you from Hamborsch, Bremen and Zeesen." The ship's company roared with delight. "They've got something. It's a conger-eel! MacAndrew'll be in the water if he doesn't look out—my God, he is!—no, Armstrong's got hold of his pants."

As the boat came closer they shouted that the conger had tried to bite the

First Lieutenant and then laid an egg on him.

"Trust Patrick to find a lady conger," said Robert.

The gannets were still dive-bombing far and wide when we hoisted in the boat. We signalled to the other ship which had been screening us. The gulls left their huddle and took up cruising stations in our slip-stream.

"Good-night, children, everywhere," clucked the loud-hailer as we crowded round the catch with the caterers of messes. The stewards secured a nice middle of the great pink fish for the wardroom, but the small fry all went back to the gannet colony—there, I suppose, to be regurgitated.

Hutting

IN those far-off halcyon days when Sympson and I were carefree sappers, we often slept in Nissen huts, but it was not until I was commissioned in the Pioneer Corps that I had anything to do with erecting them.

When the Major told me to take charge of our detachment at Burgchester I naturally asked him what work the men were doing.

"Hutting," he said.

"Ah!" I replied, "hutting!" I suppose the easy nonchalance of my reply gave him the idea that I knew all about hutting, because he immediately launched out into a long harangue about various aspects of the job.

"However," he concluded, "Sergeant Hiccough is a good man at hutting, and you won't need to tell him much. I've only got one tip for you about him. Be careful to watch his sleeves."

It struck me at the time that this was a rather curious warning. Could it be that on lonely detachments the officer and sergeant were expected to play nap together in the evenings, and

that Sergeant Hiccough had a weakness for concealing cards up his sleeves? Or was he a conjurer, and did he produce rabbits from them?

Soon after arriving on the job I found out that the "sleeves" referred to were bits of tin that were stuck sort of over and under the bits that came down and the bits that went up. I hope this technical information will not be of use to the enemy.

Right from the start I managed to impress Sergeant Hiccough and the men that I was *au fait* with the whole art of hutting. I walked round the job, looking critically at this and that, and it was astonishing what an unnerving effect this had on the hapless Pioneers.

The first thing I looked at was a brick wall in an ablution-hut. I stared at it hard, trying to find something wrong with it, and before I could find anything to criticize the man who was building it blushed and said:

"You're quite right, sir. That top course is slightly out of true. I'll take it down."

"You had better," I said grimly, and turned on my heel.

This sort of thing happened all over the job, and in the evening Sergeant Hiccough came into my room and spoke to me frankly.

"Sir," he said, "far be it from me to exceed my duty, but with your permission there is something I want to say."

"Go ahead," I said, polite but reserved.

"The fact is," he said, "that you are driving the men too hard. You are over-particular. I have no doubt that a man like yourself, who, if I may be permitted a figure of speech, has been building huts from his infancy, finds our work here and there a little shoddy."

I inclined my head.

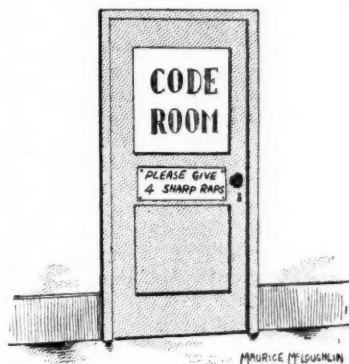
"But these Pioneers," he went on, "are almost unskilled men. It isn't that they don't try, but they just lack experience. I don't suppose one of them has had much more than ten or fifteen years in the building trade in civil life. So I hope you'll make allowances."

"Certainly, Sergeant," I said. "I trust I am reasonable. And if I can show them anything . . ."

He smiled.

"I'm glad you said that, sir," he concluded, "because as a matter of fact I have told the men on the brick-laying that you will give them a little demonstration first thing to-morrow."

Two things puzzle me. Is Sergeant Hiccough as simple as he pretends to be? And where can I get a good book on bricklaying, before morning?



Little Talks

BUT, of course, old boy, all the old nonsense has got to go!

Have another?

All right. Mild-and-bitter.

Same again, please, Mary—"All the old nonsense"? Such as what?

Well, I mean, the House of Lords, the Public School, the Party System—

One thing at a time, old boy. The House of Lords? Why has that got to go?

Well, old boy, at this date, can you really defend the hereditary what-is-it?

I don't think it's necessary. But, as a matter of fact, the hereditary what-is-it is still well respected on the race-course—and indeed the breakfast-table: to say nothing of the mines and the sea-service, and one or two other important callings—

What are you talking about? Why the breakfast-table?

Your breakfast egg would not be what it is if the hereditary what-is-it had been completely ignored.

Don't be an ass, old boy. Cheer-ho! Cheer-oh!

What I mean—eggs, and the House of Lords—well, it's two different things, isn't it?

I agree I agree entirely, old boy. But are you suggesting that it doesn't really matter what sort of cock and what breed of hen—

Of course not! It's most important. They should be most carefully selected.

Selected?

Selected.

You don't mean "elected"?

How would you elect a hen, old boy?

But that's just what I do mean about the House of Lords. They ought to be elected—like the other blighters.

You refer, perhaps, to the House of Commons?

Yes, old boy.

You believe in the elective—what-is-it?

Of course, old boy. Every decent chap does. Any fair-minded man will tell you that the hereditary what-is-it is absolutely barmy.

In short, you're pretty keen on the House of Commons?

What?

In short, you think that the House of Commons is just about the best body, for its purpose, that you could get?

Don't be absurd, old boy! Just look at 'em!

I often do. Six-hundred-and-fifteen public-spirited citizens, duly elected by the—

But, dear old boy, they're never

there! And when they are there they do nothing but play to the gallery.

The gallery?

The gallery. You know perfectly well what I mean, old boy.

You mean the electors.

Well, what if I do?

Never mind. On reflection, then, you're not wholly satisfied with the elected House of Commons?

Well, you know what I mean, old boy. Of course, it would be all right if they elected better people.

Who is "they"?

Well—

You mean "the gallery"? The electors? You?

No, I don't. I mean the Party System.

Parties, old boy, are wholly composed of electors.

Ah, but do you realize, old boy, that there are thousands of young men and women—in the Forces, in munitions, and all that, who have never voted yet and can't vote, even at a by-election, because we've stopped doing the Register, or something?

I agree about that. I think it's a bad thing. And off-hand, I can't see why we

don't put the Register in gear again. But that, after all, is a war accident, and it doesn't affect the general—

What are we arguing about?

We were arguing about the House of Lords, which you wanted to do away with—and about hens, in whose case you wished to preserve the hereditary—

Oh, yes, I remember—Have another, old boy?

If you insist.

Same again, please, Mary—But, old boy, you don't really think that the House of Lords is a good egg?

I certainly do. And it was never a better egg than it is to-day. It's in tremendous form. Have you read any of the recent debates in the House of Lords?

Can't say I have, old boy. There was a row about something somebody said the other day, but I forget what. Cheer-oh!

All the best! That's so like you, old boy. You give a dog a bad name, and that's the end of it—

But the hereditary—

Listen. I could name four or five subjects in the last year or so on which the debates in the Lords have been not only the first, but the most effective.

Oh, yes, I dare say, a lot of airy-fairy stuff nobody cares two hoots about.

Oh, no. I'm thinking of things like the Mercantile Marine, the duties of civilians in case of invasion, Family Allowances—and one or two more. Practical things.

Is that so?

What's more, as every Member of the House of Commons agrees, the debates in the Lords are on a much higher standard.

That's because they've no Party System.

Oh, yes, they have. Whips and everything. What they haven't got is constituents—electors. They need never "play to the gallery," as you charitably express it. They don't have to speak because some agent says that people in Little Bumbleton are saying it's time they made a speech. They need never speak at all—unless they've got something to say.

But, old boy, you can't tell me that just because your father was an earl four hundred years ago—

You mean my "ancestor," perhaps. But that isn't a fair picture, you know. I quite agree that there seem to be a large number of "vintage" peers who take no part in the proceedings at all. But then they do no harm. It's a comparatively small number who do the

"THEY ALSO SERVE"

THEY are brave, these people who, behind the scenes, whether at home or in the factories, go quietly about their essential tasks. Air-raids, nights in shelters, lost sleep, nerve-strain, all is accepted cheerfully, for they are determined to carry on. Even when they are bombed and lose their homes and cherished possessions, their grateful appreciation of the help given them through the PUNCH COMFORTS FUND acclaims the spirit which cannot be broken.

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"Some people even have the audacity to suggest that I ENCOURAGE his pilfering."

real work, and most of them, I should say, are not ancient creations at all.

You mean, it's like a Yacht Club, where you have a few Sailing Members and a lot of Drinking Members?

In a way, yes. What I do mean is that you may be sure that anyone who does talk in the Lords (whether he's old stock or new) is well up to the job—because it must be a much more alarming place than the Commons.

Oh, no, they're half asleep.

Not at all. Though that, if it were so, would surely be alarming enough. But look what you're up against! You've got all the tops of all the professions there are. Suppose you felt like popping up to-morrow and laying down the law about the Navy—or the Air Force—or tuberculosis—or High Finance. Well, you'd have to take on Lord Chatfield and Admiral Lord Cork and Orrery—or Lord Trenchard—or Lords Dawson and Horder—or Keynes.

A tough team, certainly.

Suppose it's the law—you've got all the Law Lords there: not the fossilized fragments of an ancient line, but the latest and liveliest lawyers we've got,

because they've been appointed to sit in the highest Court in the land—and are doing so, every day.

And then, of course, if you're not careful, you may be chewed up by a bishop.

Quite. And that's by no means all. You've got every kind of knowledge and experience on tap in that place—men who've been ambassadors and governors, administrators, business men, journalists, Civil Servants—men who are only there because they've done something worth doing and only speak when they've something to say worth saying.

So, as usual, old boy, you want to leave everything just as it is?

I didn't say that. Though, unless there's some good reason for change, it's just as well to leave things where they are. Do you want to change this beer?

No, old boy.

Well, like many other things, the dear old Second Chamber may be illogical, but it does seem to fit into our queer machinery—and it does work. I'd like to see still more Labour lads there: and I'd modify the hereditary what-is-it a bit, I think—that is, I'd let the right

to sit and speak in the House lapse after one generation, say—

After all, the Bishops' sons don't get a seat.

Nor the Law Lords' either. But I'd let every peer die with the knowledge that his son, at least, was going to follow him. And that's not sentiment only. After all, there is something in heredity.

Environment's the thing, old boy.

All right. The son of a distinguished public man whose career has finished in the Lords is likely to have acquired something valuable from his environment—from his father's talk, his friends, his guests—something which may lead him to the public service too. And, for one generation, I'd give him the chance.

But why shouldn't he get himself elected?

Because I don't believe in an elected Second Chamber.

All right then. Why have an elected House of Commons?

Are you fond of oil, old boy? Do you like vinegar?

Certainly, old boy.

Would the salad really be better if they were both the same? A. P. H.

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

The Changing Past

THESE essays (*In My Good Books*, CHATTO AND WINDUS, 7/6) express the consolation which Mr. V. S. PRITCHETT has found since the outbreak of war in re-reading the classics. During a war, he says, we turn to literature not only for respite, relaxation and escape from present suffering, but also to get away from uncertainty. "Certainty is in the past. There, so it seems to us, things have been settled. There we can see a whole picture." Not, he explains, that the past was serene to those living in it, or that the picture they saw was at all complete to their eyes. But for us the picture is a whole one, and "to see *something* whole becomes a necessity to people like ourselves whose world has fallen to pieces." It is no disparagement of an unusually penetrating critic to suggest that Mr. PRITCHETT is under an illusion when he supposes that his picture of the past is a whole one. The past, like a mountain seen from a train in motion, is perpetually changing, according to the angle and distance from which it is being observed. Two hundred years ago, to give one example, OLIVER CROMWELL was universally looked upon as a bloody tyrant and undiluted hypocrite. A hundred years ago he was a militant saint, cruel only to be kind. At present he is regarded, with some complacency, as England's very notable contribution to the world's collection of dictators. How he will appear a century hence remains to be seen.

It may be of interest to set Mr. PRITCHETT's views of certain great writers by the side of earlier views. To the Victorians GIBBON was an urbane ironist whose zeal for historical research had directed him to the Roman Empire as a subject capable of employing all his time and powers. Mr. PRITCHETT, who is too sensible either to ignore or to be unbalanced by FREUD, finds a more profound and more personal explanation of GIBBON's immense labours. "Style was the small, ugly man's form of power," he writes. If, he implies, GIBBON could not emulate NERO and TAMERLANE, he could at any rate, by the detachment of his style and the vastness of the landscape in which he set them, considerably diminish their proportions. With DOSTOEVSKI, Mr. PRITCHETT, whose coolness usually suggests not that he has passed through an emotion but that he has declined to feel it, ignores almost entirely those aspects of DOSTOEVSKI's work which led some English enthusiasts at the beginning of this century to the fantastic extreme of hailing him as a Russian Christ. Mr. PRITCHETT concentrates on DOSTOEVSKI's political mysticism, which conflicted ceaselessly with his deeper intuitions. He was, Mr. PRITCHETT points out, fascinated by the "attractive wastes of primitive myth behind the façade of its (Germany's) culture." When the great catastrophe came, DOSTOEVSKI declared, Russia would save Germany from the West, and Germany and Russia together would save the world. In another and not less preposterous mood he affirmed, anticipating HITLER, that a truly great people could never reconcile itself with a secondary rôle in humanity but without fail must exclusively play the first rôle. Such was DOSTOEVSKI on one side of his complex nature, the side which is most significant at the present moment, and the one which Mr. PRITCHETT is particularly well qualified to make clear. He is excellent, too, on SWIFT's Voyage to Laputa, the section of *Gulliver's Travels* which both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries found least suggestive, but which, in its satire on science,

has a considerable claim on the attention of these times. His view of the Victorians is naturally very different from the view they took of themselves. Except for THACKERAY, whom he names "The Great Flunkey," he sees the Victorians as "creatures from the Green Room and the stage." DICKENS with haggard Irving-like grimaces, GEORGE ELIOT and ELIZABETH BARRETT with dank, baleful Siddonish ringlets, TENNYSON glowering like a bearded villain from the Lyceum. Hardly a whole picture of the Victorians, but undeniably one aspect. In his treatment of THACKERAY, however, Mr. PRITCHETT's refusal to warm to any of his subjects is especially limiting. He allows him extreme sensibility, and a style with "something like the modern ear's curiosity." He also, in a moment of aberration, credits him with a Marxist view of Waterloo—"Thackeray knew who won that battle. It is not an accident that Osborne and Sedley are Stock Exchange speculators, the newest representatives of middle-class finance." But he makes no attempt at all to balance THACKERAY's good qualities, his tenderness and generosity, against his bad. "Every prejudice we feel about Thackeray," Mr. PRITCHETT writes, "is confirmed by his disastrous portraits. Did ever a snob look more like a footman. . . ." A footman who looked like THACKERAY would not hold his job for long. The indecision of THACKERAY's character shows in all his portraits. He never knew what he wanted to be, and so he never looked anything in particular, but only an unsatisfactory blend of worldling and writer, cynic and Colonel Newcome. More perhaps than any other writer he requires patience and sympathy in his critics.

H. K.

Omniaque hesterna . . . hodie fecisti

It would be a thousand pities if anyone were deterred by a certain petulance in its opening chapters from appreciating the spirited conclusions of Mr. H. J. MASSINGHAM's *Remembrance* (BATSFORD, 10/6). Petulance is an unlucky but natural expression of sensitiveness overstrained; and the sensitiveness which is merely touchy and tiresome in mishandled youth may be transmuted into the creative sympathy of age. That, precisely, is what has happened to Mr. MASSINGHAM; and the story of his gradual integration—under the traditional teachers, work and pain—is a stirring piece of spiritual autobiography. Its unlikely climax is a year on the anthropological staff of University College, with a kind of roving commission to prospect the settlements of primitive man. This ultimately ended (like AUGUSTINE's book-learning "which they that held me to it did not understand to what I should apply it") in a reasoned and heartfelt creed; of which the Christian faith, individual responsibility and the land are the inspiring trinity. The earth is failing us—we have robbed without enriching it; Christianity divorced from the earth is devitalized; the State, an economic machine that was once a spiritual organism, sets no store by the individual. It is time indeed that the tide turned—and here is a strong tow in the right direction.

H. P. E.

The Cage

Miss KATE BELLAMY's first novel, *Jacaranda*, had a poetic quality which more than compensated for a lack of definition in the characters. Her second novel (*The Cage*, METHUEN, 8/6), although rather excessively Proustian in manner, shows a marked advance in characterization, particularly in the treatment of the heroine, whose restlessness and innate dissatisfaction with life are very truthfully portrayed, as are the means by which she seeks to allay them. There is more than ordinary talent in Miss BELLAMY'S

Spider's Web

"PUT it down there, Corporal," said Sergeant Norman. "But I wasn't to be caught by an old trick like that; I continued to stand before the great man's trestle-table, holding my Early Chit firmly."

Presently he looked up again, smiling a ghost of that old smile we used to know before he went on the Administration side.

"Ah!" he said—"good! That's it, over there."

"What's what, Sergeant?"

"Typewriter. Aren't you the Corporal who mends typewriters?"

I said I was not. I was the Corporal who wanted an Early Chit signed, so that I could—

"Then wait outside, Corporal. I'm trying to detail ninety-nine men for Station Commander's Parade."

I stayed where I was, reading over the wording of my Early Chit. It seemed in order. It declared that I was free of duty at 1200 hours, and was permitted at that time to draw my After Duty pass and proceed out of Camp. It was written in a clear hand. All it needed was an initial from Sergeant Norman, an initial from Flight-Sergeant Tallboy and a signature from any officer under whose nose it could conveniently be thrust; then it would be valid—except that it would need rubber-stamping in the Orderly Room, if anyone in the Orderly Room could find the time or the stamp.

"Sixty - seven, sixty - eight," said Sergeant Norman, gazing through me fixedly.

I began to wonder if I had allowed myself enough time. It was already 1040 hours.

"Eighty-seven, eighty-eight," said Sergeant Norman. "Can you suggest a way of detailing ninety-nine men out of a total Course strength of eighty-eight?" He caught my eye and said sharply, "Sergeant Fearcey!"

"What?" said Sergeant Fearcey, who was tearing up scrap paper into neat rectangles at the next table.

"There's this Corporal What's-his-name here again for the Squadron monthly cleaning-materials—"

"No," I said.

"Fix him up with brooms and bath-brick, will you?"

"Heads and handles?" asked Sergeant Fearcey, not looking up.

"Just heads. There aren't any handles. If he wants handles he'll have to—"

I said that I didn't want either heads or handles; I didn't even want any

bath-brick. All I wanted was an Early Chit signed.

"You want to make up your mind what you *do* want," said Sergeant Fearcey.

"Wait outside," said Sergeant Norman.

It was 1050 hours.

At 1055 hours an airman came in with a wire waste-paper basket half full of snooker balls. He said he was sorry he had been so long, and handed the basket to me respectfully before scurrying out.

"Look, Sergeant," I said, putting the thing on a chair—"can you get my Early Chit signed, please? It's for 1200 hours, and my train goes at 1220 hours."

"Certainly," said Sergeant Norman, unexpectedly—"come back when you've taken those snooker balls wherever you want to take them, then Sergeant Fearcey will let you have all the bath-brick you want. You can put the fatigue men on and get the whole place cleaned up for the 1800 hours inspection."

"Sergeant Norman," I said. "About this Early Chit. I ought to explain that all my unit is on forty-eight hours' Pass. The only reason I didn't put in a forty-eight hours' Pass was that I had to play the violin at the Mess social last night. I have no duties, because I'm really on Pass with the others; but the men at the Gate won't let me proceed out of camp without my Sleeping-out Pass, and I can't draw that from the Guard-house until After Duty—and After Duty will be 1700 hours if I don't produce this Early Chit to say that I'm free at 1200 hours. If I don't proceed out of camp at 1200 hours, I shan't catch my train at 1220 hours; and if I don't catch that train, there isn't another train I *can* catch." I paused. I felt I had put my case well, but I thought it wise to add, "It's nearly 1100 hours now."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Sergeant Norman—"nearly 1100 hours? I've got to wheel in two corporals on charges at 1100 hours. Come along, you'll just do for the escort."

At 1140 hours I had escorted the corporals to their fate and had escorted Sergeant Norman back to the Squadron Office. He sat down at once and began counting again.

"Sergeant Norman," I breathed—"please won't you—"

"Eighty-six, eighty-seven, eighty-eight. That's all there are, you know—

eighty-eight. Ninety-nines into eighty-eight won't go; they just won't, that's all."

I don't know why I should have tried to help, but I did. I pointed out that from where I was standing there seemed to be some more names over the page.

"Nonsense!" said Sergeant Norman, turning the sheet over. "Why, so there are, though, aren't there? Blow my blue field-service cap! Jolly good! Sergeant Fearcey!"

"What?"

"It's all right. I've managed it. Ninety-nine men, all detailed. Station Commander's Parade."

"Jolly good," said Sergeant Fearcey. "Did you manage to find another N.C.O.?"

"Oh, dash," said Sergeant Norman, crestfallen—"I'd forgotten that." He looked up. "Hi! Corporal! Where d'you think you're going?"

I turned.

"I don't think I'm going anywhere," I said, tearing up my Early Chit into neat rectangles and scattering it amongst the snooker balls.

News from the Suburbs

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am sitting in a small room that was once a left-luggage office of the suburban railway station. Since then the windows have been bricked in, the doorway obstructed by a sand-bag wall and the floor impeded with timber supports for the roof, making movement about the room dangerous and unpleasant. In this weather it is hot and stuffy; in winter I expect it is cold and draughty. It is all very different from Iceland.

Standing opposite to me is an extremely beautiful W.A.A.F.

As you know, I am now at our regimental depot awaiting the pleasure of the Powers That Be. They appear to be in some quandary as to my future employment, for so far there has been no ugly wish to bring me back into immediate contact with the war. In the meantime the depot, to keep me out of mischief, have made me temporary (very temporary, I should think, when they realize what they

have done) R.T.O. at our local station. The W.A.A.F. is now looking at me with what I can only describe as a baleful and yet bewitching glance.

As far as I can make her story out, she has lost her railway-warrant and wishes for another to take her back to Aberglyagwynedd where she is stationed. I have no gazetteer, *Bradshaw* or pocket atlas, but I assume that Aberglyagwynedd is in Wales. She thinks so too.

Faced with a problem of that kind, of course, I play for time, in the hope that my N.C.O. will come back from dinner, and I ask her what her name is (it is no use asking for her telephone number as well; after all, I am only in the Army). She says "Gladys Tubbs," then hastily corrects herself and says "Jane Montgomery."

This seems a strange confusion, so I ask her for her documents. These say that she is Sue Tubbs, so I think it better to start on the commonest factor of all three and probe the Tubbs side of the name.

She then explains that she has been on leave and while on leave got married and that her name used to be Tubbs, and she produces a rather crumpled marriage certificate, and now can she have the warrant as time is getting on. The marriage certificate, unfortunately, says that one Susannah Kilshaw married one Percy Montgomery only six days ago. I feel it has not clarified the situation very much. I then notice that she signed the register with a mark and I ask her if she cannot read or write and she says No, she cannot read or write, but what has that to do with it. I ask her what she did before she was called up and she says that she worked in a travelling fair. Nor apparently can Percy Montgomery read or write, for he made a mark also, and she says, Yes, he worked in the fair as well. He was Coconuts and she was Hoopla. I feel that I am nearly Coconuts too, and that in any case they start work in travelling fairs at far too early an age.

But she says could she now have the warrant, please, as she wants to get on, and I feel that we must press on with the solution of these various names. After all, she may be a beautiful blonde spy. She certainly is extremely attractive.

She says that her real name was Sue Tubbs until a few days ago, and I ask her how it came to be changed, and she says that just before her wedding her mother told her that she wasn't her mother at all but that she had been adopted as a baby and that she ought to be married in her right name, Susannah Kilshaw. So I ask her why

she said her name was Jane and she says she did not like the name Susannah and decided to call herself Jane.

I then say that if I give her a warrant at all it will have to be in the name of Susannah Tubbs and she says, No, Jane Montgomery, but that if it will make it any easier for me she will agree to Sue Montgomery, as it is getting late and she is due back from leave.

I then ask her why she called herself Gladys, and she says that all the people who came to her stall called her Gladys for short and she just did not think and was that another train going out, and I say, Yes, I think it is, and she says it's a damned shame and that I am going to get a girl into trouble if I am not very careful. And then she starts to cry and I think that the conversation has taken a very ugly

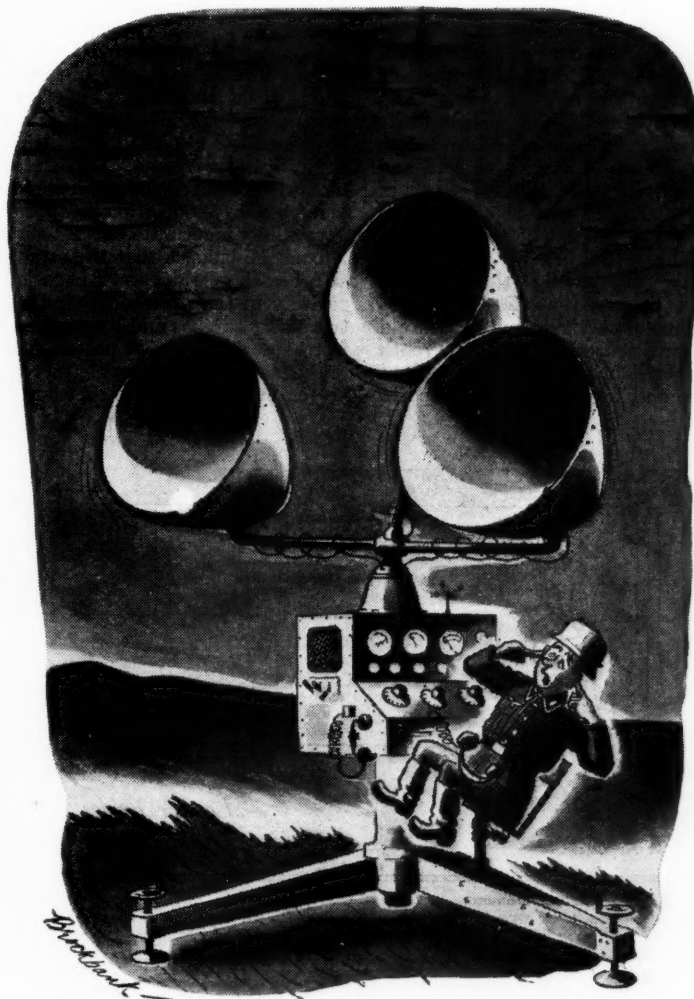
turn if anyone happened to come in at this end of it.

So I give her a warrant in the name of "Susannah (Sue) Gladys Montgomery," and she gives me a radiant smile and the office is much darker and more gloomy when she has gone.

I wish I knew what I ought to have done. It is not as though I have any books of reference readily available. I have on my shelves *Physical Training Notes 1931*, a *Field Service Pocket Book*, containing pamphlets 1, 3 and 7, a *Vocabulary of Army Ordnance Stores: Barrack and Hospital Equipment Section (Bedsteads and Their Components)*, and several manuals of drill. And, of course, a book of railway-warrants. They are not a great deal of use on occasions like this.

What would you have done, dear Mother?

Your loving Son HAROLD.



The Tie

I HAVE witnessed my first cricket match of the year. It was played between seven of Medlip and nine of Ixtholme last Saturday afternoon. I discovered the pitch fortuitously while cutting across a meadow to avoid an uninteresting detour in my journey. The tall grass had been cut down over a patch about thirty yards by ten and in the depression shiny yellow stumps and broad limy creases marked the rendezvous. There was nobody in sight so I lay down and waited in the hot sunshine.

At length an old man appeared. He made for each wicket in turn and set bails upon them with great deliberation. Then he came over to me.

"I'm Medlip's umpire," he said. "Finch is playing again for us. A good bat—but he *will* put his legs in front mostly."

The players began to arrive. They were already attired for the contest—that is, each one carried some single garment to signify his cricketing intentions. One wore a red-and-white cap; another a pair of white boots; another merely a decorative belt, and yet another (rather guiltily) a pair of whitish flannels. Serious efforts were made to put in some belated practice, and there was much unsophisticated banter. Eventually the captains decided to make a start. Medlip could muster only six men, but the old umpire was conscripted for the seventh place. Ixtholme counted nine. As I was the only spectator I was asked to

umpire at both ends and to score for both teams.

The game began with a no-ball. I had no intention of insisting upon a rigid interpretation of the laws of Marylebone, but I could not overlook a ball delivered with both feet well on the wrong side of the popping-crease. When the second, third, fourth and fifth balls were delivered in an equally faulty fashion I began to wonder when the over could possibly come to an end. However, after the sixth ball the batsmen leaned on their bats and the fielders changed over. Observing my bewilderment the Medlip captain informed me that in these parts the six-ball over was still adhered to. I ambled to the other end.

I tried to give a man out for obstructing a fielder who was about to make a catch, and I tried to prevent a bowler from delivering over and round the wicket unannounced and according to the whim of the run-up. I failed lamentably. My decisions were disregarded.

I was about to abandon my post in disgust when the serenity of the scene and the profound humility of the game reassured themselves in my mind. My anger left me and I shared in the magic of the game. From that moment I enjoyed myself immensely. I refused every legitimate appeal; I gave wildly inaccurate batting-guards; I fixed the bails so that they tumbled at a breath of wind, and I even joined actively in the proceedings by taking two smart catches and by tripping the fast bowler as he swept past to attack.

During the tea interval (there was no tea but plenty of beer in bottle) I

decided to engineer a spectacular finish. Ixtholme had made twenty-three runs all out. In thirty years I had never witnessed a county or Test match that ended in a tie. This was my golden opportunity.

When play was resumed Medlip scored at a great rate. The redoubtable Finch certainly had a good eye. His end came unexpectedly. He sliced a ball which bounced twice before entering second slip's hands. I appealed ventriloquially and promptly gave him out. By neat but unobtrusive fielding I kept the score as low as possible, and although I dismissed the last four batsmen with monstrous run-out decisions, Medlip amassed a grand total of forty-one.

The players gathered round me as I distorted my features to give credence to my imaginary computations.

"Well, 'ow've we gone on?" said the old umpire (one of my run-out victims). "An 'ollow victory, I reckon."

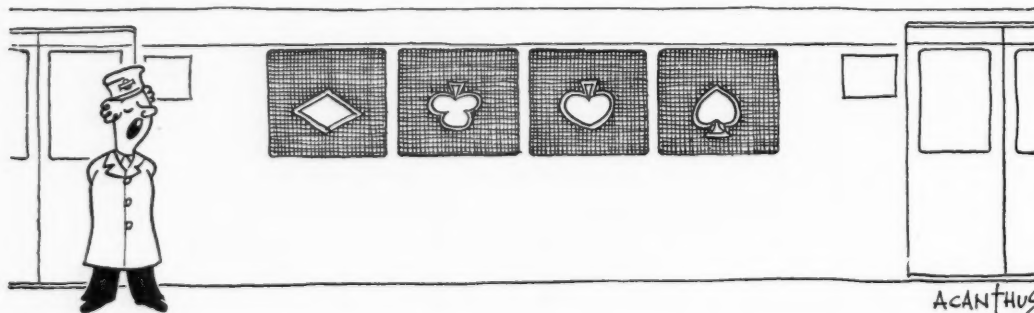
I put my pencil back into my pocket and looked round at the anxious faces.

"It's a tie," I said. "Twenty-one apiece." The expected did not happen. I remained unmolested. There were a few grunts from Ixtholme and a few grumbles from Medlip. Then the stumps were tied up with string and both teams moved instinctively in the direction of the Plough and Horses.

After drinking to the future success of both teams I ventured to refer again to the remarkable contest.

"Curious," I said, "that game ending in a tie, isn't it?"

"Oh, I dunno," said the Medlip captain, "we mostly finishes up with ties hereabouts."



"London Bridge"

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